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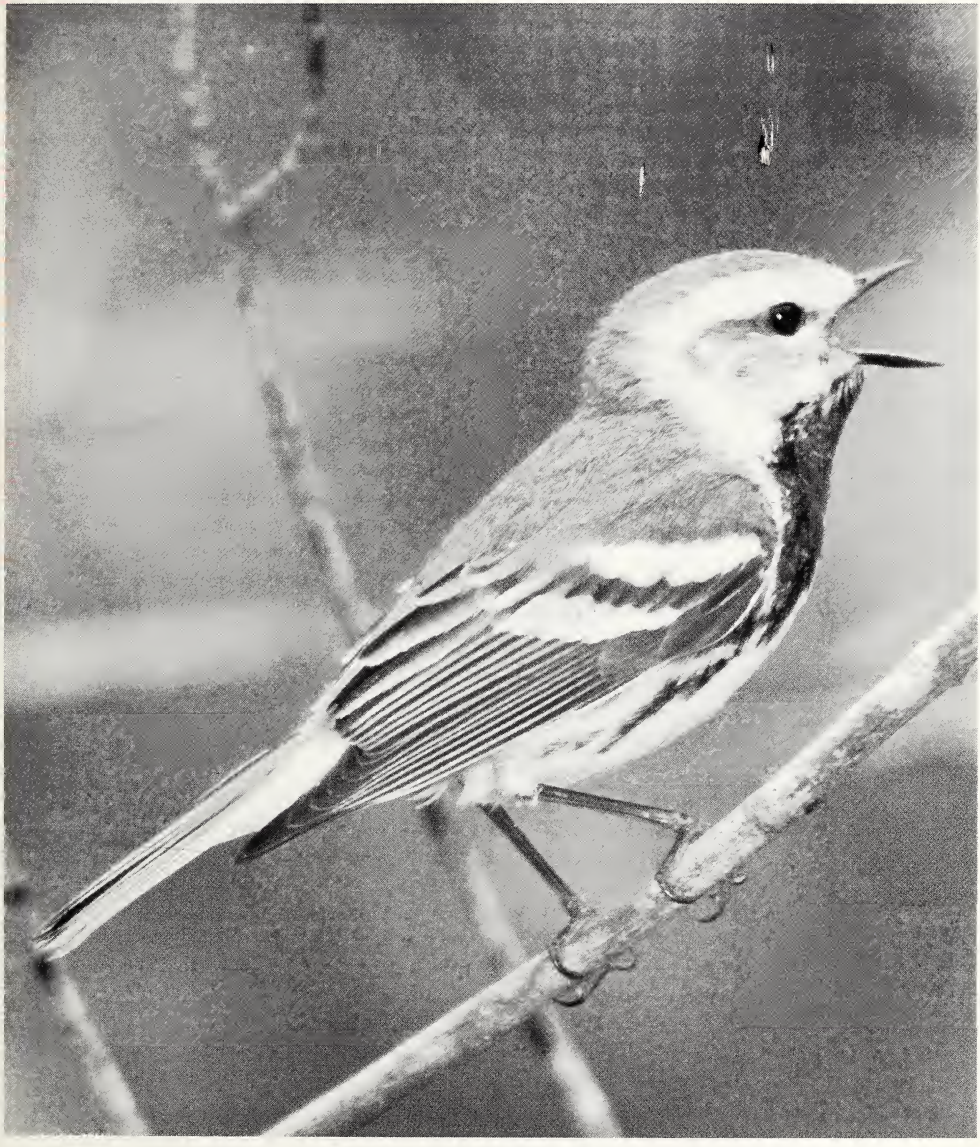
The Chat

Vol. 76 FALL 2012 No. 4



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Cover: Black-throated Green Warbler, 28 Apr 2012, Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, North Carolina. Photo by Jeff Lewis.

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Abundance and Distribution of Wilson's Plovers During the Breeding Season in South Carolina

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Abstract

Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*) is listed as threatened in South Carolina. Although the species is not federally listed, the US Shorebird Conservation Plan identified Wilson's Plover as a "species of high concern" partly due to threats on the breeding grounds. Suitable nesting habitat on the beaches of South Carolina was surveyed for breeding Wilson's Plovers for the first time between 2009–2012. A mean of 376 pairs were recorded in South Carolina with 29% on private land and 71% on public land. Of the pairs, 68% were within 1 km of an inlet and 56% were located within 0.5 km. Because Wilson's Plovers nest primarily on beaches (79%) in South Carolina and this habitat is increasingly used by humans, conservation efforts should be focused on this migratory shorebird.

Introduction

Wilson's Plover is a medium-sized plover recognized by a single breast band, brown back, whitish underside, and heavy bill. During the breeding season, the breast band and forecrown is dark brown to black in males and lighter brown in females. Juveniles are similar in appearance to adult females, but the breast band is less complete and juvenile plumage appears lighter (Corbat and Bergstrom 2000).

Wilson's Plovers are migratory shorebirds that are associated with coastal habitats. In the United States, Wilson's Plovers nest from Virginia to southern Florida and along the Gulf coast from Florida to Texas (Corbat and Bergstrom 2000). Historically, Wilson's Plovers also nested as far north as New Jersey and Maryland, but the last nest record for Maryland was in 1985 (Hoffman 1996).

Although it is not federally listed, the US Shorebird Conservation Plan identified Wilson's Plover as a "species of high concern", partly due to threats on the breeding grounds (Brown et al. 2001). It is listed as state endangered in Maryland and Virginia, state threatened in Georgia and South

Carolina, a species of special concern in North Carolina, and state protected in Alabama (Corbat and Bergstrom 2000, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission 2008, Georgia Department of Natural Resources 2010, Maryland Natural Heritage Program 2010, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries 2011, Alabama Natural Heritage Program 2012, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources 2012).

The purpose of this study was to determine the abundance and distribution of nesting pairs of Wilson's Plovers in South Carolina. For the first time, nearly all suitable nesting habitat on the beaches of South Carolina was surveyed for breeding Wilson's Plovers. This study provides baseline data for South Carolina that can be used to analyze population trends and to identify important sites for conservation.

Methods

Surveys were conducted in 2009 (May 10–July 15), 2010 (April 20–June 7), 2011 (April 19–June 1) and 2012 (March 29–May 24). Wilson's Plovers are known to nest in coastal dunes and on beaches. All suitable nesting habitat on beaches along the coast of South Carolina was surveyed for pairs of Wilson's Plovers at least once during the study, except 4 km of coast at Edingsville Beach. Beaches with sea walls and rocks or with forest or thick vegetation adjacent to the high tide line were not surveyed because plovers prefer nesting in more open areas with sparse vegetation (Corbat and Bergstrom 2000). Wilson's Plover density in South Carolina is significantly lower at sites with human development (Dikun 2008). Sites with heavy human disturbance, such as Myrtle Beach, were considered unsuitable habitat and also were not surveyed.

In addition to beach habitat, shell rakes composed primarily of washed Eastern oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*) shells that were visited as part of other avian monitoring projects were included in the study. Also, two sites that have managed wetland impoundments were surveyed because Wilson's Plovers had been observed there in the past. During surveys, sites were categorized as mainland beach, barrier island beach, impoundment, estuarine shell island, estuarine sand island, and shell rake adjacent to marsh.

The primary goal of the survey was to record the number of Wilson's Plover adults and to determine whether they represented a breeding pair. Wilson's Plovers were located by direct observation and by listening for their calls. Number of nests, chicks, fledglings and sex of adult, if possible, were also recorded. Adults were categorized as breeding or unknown. Adults were considered breeding if they displayed courtship or defensive territorial behavior or if a nest, chicks or fledglings were found near an adult. Occasionally only one adult was observed near a nest site but still categorized as representing a breeding pair. During surveys later in the season, some fledglings were difficult to distinguish from adults; thus total adults recorded at each site may have included older fledglings.

Thirty-six individuals, mostly volunteers, participated in the surveys, but the majority of the sites were surveyed by four individuals. Surveys were

done in conditions that afforded high visibility. Days with high wind, rain or low light were avoided. To minimize the amount of habitat that needed to be searched, surveys were conducted around high tide (2 hours before to 2 hours after high tide). Surveying consisted of walking through all potential nesting habitat. If suitable habitat was wide, such as an expansive dune system, a line of parallel surveyors would walk through the habitat to keep track of moving birds and minimize overestimating breeding pairs. Locations of plovers and area surveyed were recorded with a GPS unit or on an aerial photo. Some areas were surveyed for more than one year, and the mean number of pairs and standard deviation were calculated for each site.

Distances of the coast surveyed were calculated in a GIS by georeferencing survey routes onto projected digital imagery in ArcGIS 10.0 at 1:25,000 scale (ESRI 2009). Only one survey per site was used for mapping locations of pairs. For sites that were surveyed in multiple years, the survey with the most pairs or best location information was used. Distances of pairs to the nearest inlet were calculated by creating 0.25 km, 0.5 km, and 1 km buffers around points marking an inlet. At broad inlets, where islands terminated at a river or bay, multiple points at the edge of the island were created to mark the inlet. For small inlets such as a breach in an island, only one point was created. For small estuarine islands, the entire perimeter of the island was classified as an inlet. These buffers were overlaid onto breeding pair locations to categorize pairs into distance classes. The density of pairs north and south of Charleston Harbor was calculated to determine if there were geographical differences in the state. Density was calculated by dividing the number of pairs by linear suitable habitat.

Results

A mean of 376 pairs were recorded and 131 km of suitable coastline habitat were surveyed (Table 1). The total of 634 adult plovers counted during the four years included 27 plovers whose age and breeding status observers were uncertain of. Nests with eggs were observed from April 19 to June 3. Thorough nest searches were not conducted during the study, so these dates represent a minimum window of nesting in South Carolina. Fledglings were recorded from May 10 to July 15, the latter being the latest date on which surveys were conducted; thus these dates also represent a minimum window in which fledglings are present. On private land there were 107 Wilson's Plover pairs (28%), and on public land there were 269 pairs (72%). Within 1 km of an inlet, there were 268 pairs (68%), 221 pairs (56%) were within 0.5 km and 170 pairs (43%) were within 0.25 km. Density of plovers north of Charleston Harbor was 2.4 pairs/km (188 pairs in 79 km), which was lower than the density south of Charleston Harbor, where there were 3.6 pairs/km (188 pairs in 52 km). On barrier island beaches there were 296 pairs (79%), 30 pairs (8%) in impoundments, 29 pairs (8%) on mainland beaches, 10 pairs (3%) on sandy estuarine islands, 9 pairs (2%) on shell rakes at the edge of marsh, and 2 pairs (1%) on shell estuarine islands.

Table 1. Estimated number of Wilson's Plover pairs and (total number of plovers) at 41 sites in SC, visited at least once during the breeding seasons of 2009–2012, listed north to south. Total number of plovers includes adults and plovers of unknown age. Mean number of pairs (followed by standard deviation) for each site. A blank space indicates the site was not surveyed.

Sites	Pairs (total individuals)				Mean pairs
	2009	2010	2011	2012	(SD)
Waites Island	7 (11)	8 (12)			8 (1)
Huntington Beach	3 (5)	5 (12)			4 (2)
Litchfield Beach	2 (5)	2 (2)			2 (0)
Pawley's Island		0			0
Debideaux	3 (3)	0			2 (2)
Bosun's Point	1 (1)				1
North Island	26 (62)	23 (41)			25 (2)
Sand Island		9 (17)			9
South Island, Gibson Pond	2 (9)				2
South Island			15 (26)		15
Cedar Island	16 (29)	14 (25)			15 (1)
Murphy Island	8 (15)				8
Cape Island	29 (58)				29
White Banks		2 (4)			2
Raccoon Key	15 (26)	16 (30)			16 (1)
Lighthouse Island	17 (35)	23 (45)			20 (4)
Bulls Bay shell rakes		9 (18)			9
Bull Island	8 (14)	10 (16)			9 (1)
Capers Island	8 (14)	6 (11)			7 (1)
Dewees Island	5 (9)	4 (8)			5 (1)
Isle of Palms	0 (0)				0
Sullivan's Island	2 (3)				2
Morris Island, North end	2 (3)	1 (2)			2 (1)
Morris Island, South End			33 (66)		33
Folly Beach	11 (22)	7 (17)			9 (1)
Bird Key	12 (22)	8 (16)	7		9 (3)
Kiawah Island	28 (53)	26 (65)			27 (1)
Seabrook Island		2 (4)			2
Deveaux Bank	1 (3)				1
Botany Bay Plantation	7 (12)	12 (21)			10 (4)
Edisto Beach State Park		4 (7)			4
Otter Island	3 (6)	3 (6)		6 (16)	4 (2)
Harbor Island	2 (4)	5 (10)	14 (27)		7 (6)
Hunting Island	1 (2)				1
Fripp Island	3 (5)		0 (0)		3 (2)
Pritchard's Island		1 (2)	0 (0)		1 (1)
Little Capers			37 (73)		37
St Philips	2 (5)	1 (2)		1 (2)	1 (0)
Bay Point				11 (20)	11
Savannah Spoil Sites	43	24	18		28 (13)
Total					376

Discussion

This study expanded the survey efforts of Dikun (2008), which covered 26 sites (representing 25% of the South Carolina coast) in May and June of 2006 and 2007. Because the 2006 and 2007 surveys counted only the number of birds seen and did not determine the number of breeding pairs, it is difficult to compare results of these surveys to our project. Dikun (2008) found a high number of plovers at North Island, Cedar Island, and Lighthouse Island. These islands are among the ten sites in these surveys that had the highest number of breeding pairs.

Range-wide breeding-pair surveys are lacking, but Wilson's Plover estimates are available for some states. Wilson's Plover surveys in Virginia between 1988 and 2009 found between 23 and 50 pairs (Smith et al. 2009). In 2004 and 2007 in North Carolina, statewide surveys estimated 232 and 240 pairs respectively (Houston and Cameron 2008). A 2010 survey of the Georgia coast found 350 breeding pairs (Georgia Department of Natural Resources 2010). Surveys in Florida suggest that there are at least 160 pairs (Burney 2009). In 2004, a survey of Texas found 817 pairs of Wilson's Plovers (Kolar and Withers 2004).

Unlike American Oystercatchers (*Haematopus palliatus*) in South Carolina, which nest primarily on public land (97% on public land, SCDNR unpublished data), private and public land are both important for breeding Wilson's Plovers. Although we did not categorize the amount of human disturbance at each site, it appeared that the most undeveloped and remote sites (far from a boat ramp or difficult to access via boat because of shallow creeks, bars, etc.) had more Wilson's Plovers than sites that are easily accessible by humans. For example, the north end of Morris Island (1.5 km of linear suitable habitat) had only two pairs and the south end (1.2 km of suitable habitat) had 33. The north end of the island is easily accessible to boaters in Charleston Harbor and has frequent recreational use. The south end is more difficult to access and has less use by humans (personal obs.) and this lack of disturbance probably results in higher numbers of Wilson's Plover pairs. Dikun (2008) found the density of Wilson's Plovers at developed (2.0 plovers/km) and undeveloped (7.0 plovers/km) sites was significantly different. Human disturbance can negatively affect reproductive success on beach nesting birds by reducing hatching and brood success (Burger 1995). We found that density was higher in the southern part of SC compared to the north of Charleston Harbor, although the reasons for this difference were not investigated.

A majority of Wilson's Plovers were found within 0.5 km of an inlet. Habitat at inlets is often flat because over-wash reduces the height of the dunes (pers. obs). Dikun (2008) in a study of nest site characteristics in South Carolina found Wilson's Plover nests were in habitat consisting of over-wash areas with scattered dunes more than other available habitat types such as elevated dunes or active over-wash. This habitat type may be preferred by Wilson's Plovers because: a) it provides dunes that will not flood as easily as low areas, b) dune vegetation provides a place for chicks to

hide, and c) open areas that wash provide visibility of predators (Burger 1987, Dikun 2008). Areas around inlets are often the only area of a beach accessible to boaters and thus should be high priority for protection of nesting plovers from disturbance.

Due to logistical difficulties in visiting all sites in one year, this project spanned four years. Many sites that were surveyed in multiple years had similar numbers of Wilson's Plovers each year; therefore surveying the state over the course of multiple years may result in an accurate estimate of pairs in South Carolina. However some sites, such as Harbor Island, had large fluctuations in the number of pairs. On the south end of Harbor Island a sand spit formed and provided additional Wilson's Plover nesting habitat in 2011, thereby resulting in an increase in pairs. As coastal habitat changes, plovers would be expected to move to make use of newly formed available nesting habitat and to leave areas that have limited optimal habitat. Future surveys should attempt to cover the entire state in one year to get a more accurate breeding estimate.

Two sites, Gibson Pond on South Island and Savannah River Dredge Spoil Sites, which have managed wetland impoundments, were surveyed because Wilson's Plovers had been observed there in the past. The Savannah River Dredge Spoil Site is a US Army Corps of Engineers dredge spoil containment facility located in Jasper County. The facility is located adjacent to the Savannah River and approximately 14 km from the front ocean. South Island is part of the Yawkey Center, a coastal property owned by South Carolina Department of Natural Resources in Georgetown County. South Carolina has 70,500 acres of old rice field impoundments (Miglarese and Sandifer 1982) that are often dry in the spring and early summer. Eight per cent of the plover pairs in South Carolina were found in impoundments because Savannah Spoil Sites had many pairs (28). Savannah Spoil Sites are important to other shorebirds and waterbirds, and highlight management potential in artificial habitats. Plovers may nest in impoundments that were not visited, and future surveys may include surveying a larger sample of this widespread habitat type.

Only two areas with shell rakes, located in Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, were included in this survey. These sites are White Banks, three estuarine islands in Bulls Bay, and the shell rakes along the southwest edge of Bulls Bay. Although only a few sites that were not beach habitat were surveyed, we expect that most Wilson's Plovers in South Carolina nest on beaches. Unlike American Oystercatchers that are frequently observed nesting on shell rakes in South Carolina, i.e. 56% of American Oystercatchers in South Carolina nest on washed shell habitat (Sanders et al. 2008), Wilson's Plovers are not common in this habitat type. American Oystercatchers have received much conservation and research attention (Schulte et al. 2010). Because Wilson's Plovers nest primarily on beaches and this habitat is increasingly used by humans, equal conservation concern should be focused on this shorebird.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the many people who helped with these surveys especially M. Bimbi, N. Dias, S. Calver, A. Given, J. Jordan, A. Segars, C. Snook. We appreciate the many properties, private and public, that allowed us access to complete this project. This manuscript benefitted from comments by C. Hand, J. Thibault, Dr. C. Hill and K. Fiala. This work was partly funded by federal money from the State Wildlife Grant Program.

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General Field Notes

General Field Notes briefly report such items as rare sightings, unusual behaviors, significant nesting records, or summaries of such items.

First, second, or third sightings of species in either state must be submitted to the appropriate Bird Records Committee prior to publication in The Chat.

First North Carolina Record of Cassin's Sparrow (*Peucaea cassinii*)

Gil Miller
22201 Sneads Grove Road, Laurel Hill, NC 28351

About 11:00 on 18 April 2011, I observed a Cassin's Sparrow (*Peucaea cassinii*) on Slate Road, Wagram, NC, just south of Camp Mackall in Scotland County, NC (N34.996269°, W79.463583°). I noticed a large sparrow-like bird perched on a bare tree branch in a brushy field adjacent to the road. The light and angle made for poor viewing. The bird seemed relatively nondescript. My first thought was a large Brewer's Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*). As I watched, the bird flew up from the perch into the air singing and fluttering its wings. This appeared to be skylarking behavior. The sparrow then flew down into a brushy area about 100 feet from the edge of the road. I heard the bird sing again, but I didn't recognize the song. I went home, did some research, listened to taped sparrow songs, and was reasonably confident that it was a Cassin's Sparrow. I have seen this species once in Texas.

The next day (19 April), at approximately 06:30, I returned with my spotting scope. The bird was already skylarking and perching frequently, allowing me good looks through the scope. The bird had a thin white eye ring and a whitish throat outlined by a dark stripe on each side of the throat. The breast and sides of the breast had some blurry faint streaks. The upper back pattern of black spots on rusty red feathers was a very distinctive field mark on this otherwise drab bird. I was able to view the bird perched and in flight, and the long gray-brown, rounded tail with whitish corners was clearly seen. This tail, along with the larger size, song, and characteristic courtship behavior are all distinctive of Cassin's Sparrow. The local Field Sparrows (*S. pusilla*) on territories nearby were smaller with more rounded heads, lighter and smaller bills, and white wing bars. Both the Indigo Buntings (*Passerina cyanea*) and Blue Grosbeaks (*P. caerulea*) in the vicinity had heavier, two-toned bills and shorter tails.

The following morning (20 April) at approximately 07:00, local birders Fran and Wayne Irvin met me on site. The bird was actively skylarking again. We got good looks at the bird in flight as well as perched at a distance of about 75 to 100 feet. Wayne and Fran confirmed the identification and then started calling other birders who would be interested in seeing the sparrow.

Figure 1. Cassin's Sparrow, Slate Road, Scotland Co, NC. Photo by Brady Beck.

On 30 April, Brady Beck (NC Wildlife Resources Commission biologist) videotaped this Cassin's. Many other observers photographed this bird, and these photographs are currently on the Carolina Bird Club website. Susan Campbell and I were the last to observe the bird on the morning of 3 May. Between 23 April and 3 May, over 100 people viewed the bird.

Cassin's Sparrows are found in the arid shrub grasslands of the southern high plains and southwestern United States. However, the late spring of 2011 produced a mini-invasion of sorts well east of the Cassin's Sparrow's normal range, likely a result of extreme drought on the breeding grounds that led to birds seeking "greener" breeding habitat elsewhere. During the first week of May, vagrants were found in Louisiana, Illinois, Arkansas, and eastern Texas, in addition to the bird that was still present in Scotland County (Swick, 2011). This record has been accepted by the North Carolina Bird Records Committee (Tove et al., 2012), and because it was documented both by color photos and by audio recordings, it was placed on the state's Official List. This is the first record of Cassin's Sparrow for the state.

Figure 2. Cassin's Sparrow, 26 Apr 2011, Slate Road, Scotland Co, NC. Photo by Greg Massey.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Scott Hartley, Superintendent, Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve, for his support in preparing this manuscript. The author also thanks Susan Campbell for her early review and additions to the text.

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Fifty Years Ago in *The Chat*—December 1962

David A. Adams, curator of ornithology at the NC State Museum, authored the lead paper, an analysis of collections of birds killed at four TV towers and two ceilometers at Winston-Salem, Raleigh, Goldsboro, Columbia, and Charleston on the night of 6 September 1962. That night was cloudy and rainy, and had a large migratory movement brought about by a 10–20°F temperature drop from the first large cold front of the season. It was thought that cloudiness and precipitation favored disorientation and flying into obstructions, leading to a large kill. Not all of the killed birds were collected, but 4189 specimens representing 61 species were collected and examined.

The fall field trip at Myrtle Beach was attended by 102 members and guests, and they observed 114 species.

Rarity reports included a Roseate Spoonbill seen between Wrightsville and Carolina Beach about 16 August 1962, the first record in NC since 1919. Swallow-tailed Kites were observed a number of times between 26 May and 23 July in the Buxton Woods area near Frisco. On 21 May 1962, James F. Parnell observed a Purple Gallinule at Lake Raleigh, just south of the Raleigh city limits. The only prior Wake County record was by H. H. Brimley in 1887. Dan Knight, Robert Thomas, John Fussell, and John Thompson observed three Ruffs at North River marsh in Carteret County, NC on 29 July 1962. James F. Parnell observed a Gray Kingbird at Battery Island, Southport, NC on 25 July 1962, and with T. L. Quay relayed a previously unpublished record of Gray Kingbird near Buxton on 12 March 1957. Baltimore Orioles were reported nesting near Greensboro, NC for a second successive year.

BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

Josh Southern
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(All dates Summer 2012, unless otherwise noted)

Briefs for the Files is a seasonal collection of uncommon-to-rare or unusual North and South Carolina bird sightings and events which do not necessarily require a more detailed Field Note or article. Reports of your sightings are due the 20th of the month after the end of the previous season.

Winter	*December 1–February 28*	*due March 20*
Spring	*March 1–May 31*	*due June 20*
Summer	*June 1–July 31*	*due August 20*
Fall	*August 1–November 30*	*due December 20*

Reports may be submitted in any format, but I prefer that you use email, list multiple sightings in taxonomic order (rather than by date or location), and type your report directly into the body of the email. If your sightings are in a file, please copy-and-paste the text into the body of the email, rather than sending an attachment.

Suitable reports for the Briefs include any sightings you feel are unusual, rare, noteworthy, or just plain interesting to you in any way! It is my responsibility to decide which reports merit inclusion in the Briefs.

Please be sure to include details of any rare or hard-to-identify birds.

I rely in part on sightings reported in Carolinabirds. Please don't, however, rely on me to pick up your sightings from Carolinabirds. Instead, please also send your sightings directly to me as described above.

If I feel that your sighting warrants a Field Note, I will contact either you or the appropriate state Field Notes editor. You may, of course, submit your Field Note directly to the editor without going through me.

Reports published herein may include sightings that require review by the state's bird records committee. Such reports are not considered accepted records until, and unless, they are so ruled by the committee.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: In North Carolina, where sightings of this species are rare, two were seen by refuge staff at Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), 19 June (*fide* Jerry Fringeli), but were never relocated. Six photographed in flight over Mullet Pond, Huntington Beach State Park (SP), SC, 16 July (Alyce Lanoue, *fide* Sharon & Phil Turner) were a good find for the northern part of the SC coast.

Greater White-fronted Goose, 27 July 2012, Charleston Southern University, SC. Photo by Pam Ford.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Individuals were seen on Lake Junaluska, Waynesville, NC, 23 June (Nathan Gatto) through 11 July (Cherrie Sneed); with Canada Geese in a residential area on Lake Hickory, just N of Hickory, NC, 27–28 July (Dwayne Martin); and returning to Charleston Southern University, North Charleston, SC, 24 July (*fide* Matthew Campbell). Because this species has never previously been documented in our region during the summer, the origin of these geese is questionable.

Mottled Duck: One was photographed at Twin Lakes, Sunset Beach, Brunswick Co, NC, 7 July (Ali Iyoob). Up to three Mottled Ducks have wintered on Twin Lakes and adjacent Lake Medcalf in recent years, but this sighting is the site's first during summer.

Blue-winged Teal: A drake was photographed on Salem Lake, Forsyth Co, NC, 17 June (Martin Wall).

Northern Shoveler: Six at Bear Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Colleton Co, SC, 6 July (Ann Truesdale, Cherrie Sneed) provided a very unusual mid-summer sighting.

Northern Pintail: A female was seen at Mattamuskeet NWR, Hyde Co, NC, 21 June (Audrey Whitlock, Peggy Eubank) and 23 June (Jeff Lewis).

Ring-necked Duck: A drake was photographed on Lake Reidsville, Rockingham Co, NC, 14 June (Martin Wall), where it had remained since late March.

Common Eider: The female that lingered at Oregon Inlet, Dare Co, NC, through the spring remained until at least 27 June (*fide* Jeff Lewis).

Surf Scoter: A near-adult male apparently moved up the NC coast in late June, with sightings made off Emerald Isle, 24 June (Scott Winton); off

Immature male Surf Scoter, 28 June 2012, Oregon Inlet, NC. Photo by Jeff Lewis.

nearby Fort Macon, Atlantic Beach, 25 June (Sue Edwards); and at Oregon Inlet, 28 June (Jeff Lewis).

Black Scoter: One, possibly sick or injured, was photographed off Ocean Isle Beach, Brunswick Co, NC, 31 July (Walt Kent).

Common Merganser: This species apparently bred again this year on the Green River in Polk Co, NC, where nine birds were reported 3 July (*fide* Jeff Lemons) and three were seen on the Lake Adger portion of the river, 15 July (Lemons).

Red-breasted Merganser: A female seen at the W end of Huggins Island, Swansboro, NC, 9–10 June (Ginger Travis) was somewhat late to depart.

Common Loon: Summer sightings included one photographed on the Cape Fear River from Brunswick Town, NC, 2 June (John Ennis); three, one of which was in breeding plumage, around Swansboro, NC, in early June (Ginger Travis); one, injured, photographed on Seabrook Island, SC, 28 June (*fide* David Gardner); and one at Lake James SP, Burke Co, NC, 6 July (Jamie Cameron).

Herald (Trindade) Petrel: Light-morph individuals were seen during pelagic trips out of Hatteras, NC, 2 June and 7 July (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Wilson's Storm-Petrel: A rare from-shore sighting was made at the jetty at Huntington Beach SP, SC, where it was photographed, 18 June (Kyle Fitz, Kathleen O'Grady, Miriam Oudejans, Jing Zhang).

Wood Stork: 161 nests were counted in the long-established breeding colony at Lays Lake, Columbus Co, NC, this summer (Sara Schweitzer). Two other breeding sites were noted in NC this year—one with about 20 nests on private property just E of Tabor City, NC; and the other, first noted last summer, along the Black River on the border of Bladen Co and Pender Co, NC (*fide* Schweitzer).

Masked Booby: An adult Masked Booby was photographed during a fishing trip out of Hatteras, NC, 12 June (Brian Patteson).

Brown Booby: A juvenile Brown Booby was discovered on the jetty at Huntington Beach SP, SC, 8 June (Brittany Hoffnagle, *fide* Chris Hill). Multiple birders visited the site until the bird was last reported the morning of 15 June (Thomas McNeil, Cathy Myers). Individual juveniles were also

Juvenile Brown Booby, 10 June 2012, Huntington Beach State Park, SC. Photo by Jeff Lemons.

photographed off Hatteras, NC—on a fishing charter 12 June (Brian Patteson) and during a pelagic trip 7 July (Patteson, et al.).

Anhinga: Suspected of breeding in the White Oak Creek arm of Jordan Lake, Chatham Co, NC, one adult male Anhinga was seen 2 June (Harry LeGrand) and two birds were seen there 17 July (Nick Flanders, et al.).

American White Pelican: One, probably the same bird seen there in May, remained at Pea Island NWR, NC, 3 June (Richard Veit) and was relocated at nearby Oregon Inlet, 26 June (Jonathan Cooley).

Reddish Egret: Sightings included an adult photographed on Shackleford Banks, NC, in early June (*fide* Ali Iyoob); an immature on the W end of Oak Island, NC, 16 June (Sharon Smart); three at Pea Island NWR, NC, 18 June (Ed Smith, *fide* Audrey Whitlock); an adult near the jetty at Huntington Beach SP, SC, 25 June (Paul Serridge); an immature on Mullet Pond at Huntington Beach, 26 June (Serridge); three immatures at the S end of Litchfield Beach, SC, 29 June (Serridge); two, including one white-morph, near Johnson Creek Inlet, Hunting Island SP, SC, 14 July (Simon Harvey); and three at Mary's House Pond, Bear Island WMA, Colleton Co, SC, 27 July (Willy Hutcheson).

Glossy Ibis: 75 near the ferry terminal on Cedar Island, Carteret Co, NC, 15 July (John Fussell, Jack Fennell) provided a good count for that site. Fussell noted that this species was more common in the county this year than in previous years.

Roseate Spoonbill: Some of the higher counts in SC were 26 at Bear Island WMA, 14 June (Chris Feeney); 18 at Savannah NWR, 23 June (Jack Colcolough); and seven at Mullet Pond, Huntington Beach SP, SC, 29 June (Sharon & Phil Turner). Three found with other waders in a muddy portion of a soybean field in Orangeburg Co, SC, 29 June (David Weathers) were unusual for a site away from the coast. In NC, one was seen at the Salt Pond, Cape Point, Buxton, NC, 3–10 July (Jeff Lemons, Neal Moore, m. obs.) and two juveniles were found at Twin Lakes, Sunset Beach, NC, 7 July (Thierry Besançon).

Roseate Spoonbills, 14 June 2012, Bear Island WMA, SC. Photo by Chris Feeney.

Swallow-tailed Kite: A count of 200+ over farm fields in Allendale Co, SC, 17 July (Buddy Campbell, Ken Scott) was remarkable. Farther inland than is typical, six were seen over Townville, SC, 24 and 26 June (Matt Johnson). Seven were seen over a field off NC-87, near Lock and Dam No. 1 on the Cape Fear River, Bladen Co, NC, 24 July (John Ennis), in an area where the species is suspected to breed. Other NC sightings were of vagrant individuals over NC-12 just S of Salvo, Dare Co, 4 June (Wayne Forsythe, Simon Harvey, J. B. Hines); I-40 near Old Fort, McDowell Co, NC, 13 July (Michael Welch); and Lake Townsend, Guilford Co, NC, photographed 15 July (Uwe Heine).

Swallow-tailed Kite, 19 July 2012, Millet, SC. Photo by Phil Fowler.

Mississippi Kite: 282+ along Laurel Hill Drive at Savannah NWR, SC, 7 July (Ron & Garnet Underwood) provided a high count. Three were seen in a neighborhood in Greensboro, NC, 12 June (Scott DePue) where the species has nested for the past nine years. Locally unusual were individuals in flight over Forsyth Co, NC, 12 June (DePue); a site just W of Morehead City, NC, 14 June (Bob Holmes); and Prairie Ridge Ecostation in Raleigh, NC, 20 June (Nick Flanders, Scott Winton).

Northern Harrier: Sporadic summer reports were of one over Shackleford Banks, NC, in mid-June (*fide* Robert Meehan); a female in flight over Jane Bald and Round Bald, Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, NC, 19 July (Jeff Beane); and one over American Turf Farm near Creswell, NC, 29 July (Jeff Lewis).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Possibly breeding in our region were individuals in Cary, NC, an adult, 4 June (Mike Tove); in Clayton, NC, an adult, 16 June (Kurt Barnhart, Tove); and along South Fork New River, at Absher Rd, Ashe Co, NC, 10 July (Ed Corey, Nick Flanders, Paul Taillie, et al.).

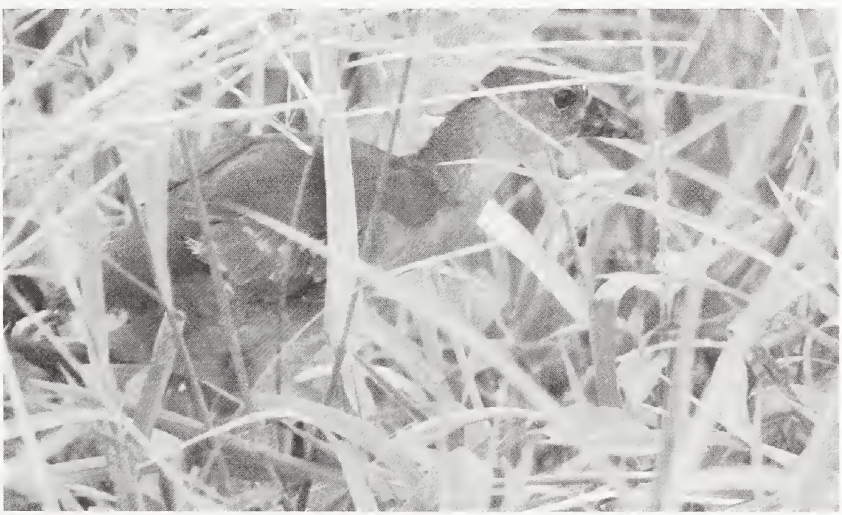
Cooper's Hawk: For the second year in a row, a pair nested only a few hundred yards from the ocean on Sullivan's Island, Charleston Co, SC, in June (Hal Currey).

Broad-winged Hawk: At least two were observed in a SE portion of Croatan National Forest (NF), near Mill Creek, NC, throughout the summer (Jack Fennell), suggestive of breeding at that site again this year.

Black Rail: Two were heard in the short grass marsh at Bear Island WMA, Colleton Co, SC, 14 June (Chris Feeney).

Virginia Rail: The individual at Salem Lake, Winston-Salem, NC, first heard during the spring, remained until at least 13 June (John Haire).

Purple Gallinule: Breeding was confirmed at two sites in SC—at Donnelley WMA, Colleton Co, where five birds, including two chicks, were seen 27 July (Willy Hutcheson); and at Savannah NWR, Jasper Co, where multiple adults and juveniles were photographed 31 July (Cathy Miller). One in the swamp behind Mullet Pond at Huntington Beach SP, SC, 7 June (Stu Gibeau) was a good find for that site.



Juvenile Purple Gallinule, 31 July 2012, Savannah NWR, SC. Photo by Cathy Miller.

American Coot: 240 at Mattamuskeet NWR, NC, 23 June (Jeff Lewis) represented a very large number for our region in summer.

Limpkin: One photographed at Savannah NWR, Jasper Co, SC, 28 July (Phillip Hodgkins) provided our region with its first Limpkin sighting in several years.

Black-bellied Plover: One found at the sod farm along Hooper Lane, Henderson Co, NC, 30 July (Dennis Kent, John Scavetto) was joined by a second bird, 31 July (Wayne Forsythe, Ron Selvey).

American Golden-Plover: One at the sod farm along Hooper Lane, Henderson Co, NC, 30 July (Dennis Kent, John Scavetto) and 31 July (Wayne Forsythe, Ron Selvey) was somewhat early.

Semipalmated Plover: 40+ at the sod farm along Hooper Lane, Henderson Co, NC, 31 July (Wayne Forsythe, Ron Selvey) was a great count for the mountain region.

Black-necked Stilt: Locally unusual were one or two near the ferry terminal at Cedar Island, NC, 11 July through 29 July (m. obs.) and one at the Davis Impoundment, Carteret Co, NC, 29 July (John Fussell, Jack Fennell).

Black-necked Stilt, 12 July 2012, Cedar Island, NC. Photo by Phil Fowler.

Spotted Sandpiper: A count of 28 near the ferry terminal at Cedar Island, NC, 8 July (John Fussell, Jack Fennell) was rather large for that mid-summer date.

Upland Sandpiper: The first of the fall migrants arriving were two at the sod farm along Hooper Lane, Henderson Co, NC, 27 July (Todd Arcos, Wayne Forsythe) and 13 at American Turf Farm near Creswell, NC, 29 July (Jeff Lewis, Audrey Whitlock).

Whimbrel: Providing the sixth record from the mountain region, and second from that specific site, a Whimbrel was seen and photographed at the sod farm along Hooper Lane, Henderson Co, NC, 27–30 July (Wayne Forsythe, Todd Arcos).

Sanderling: A rare transient in the mountains, a Sanderling was found on the shore of Lake James SP, Burke Co, NC, 22 July (Jamie Cameron).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: One at the ferry terminal pond on Cedar Island, NC, 8 July (John Fussell, Jack Fennell) through 13 July (John Voigt) was unusual for mid-summer.

Whimbrel, 29 July 2012, Mills River, NC. Photo by Phil Fowler.

White-rumped Sandpiper: One at the ferry terminal pond on Cedar Island, NC, 8 July (John Fussell, Jack Fennell) through 17 July (Jeff Lemons) was unusual for mid-summer.

Pectoral Sandpiper: Ten at the sod farm along Hooper Lane, Henderson Co, NC, 28–30 July (Wayne Forsythe, Dennis Kent, John Scavetto) provided a good count for the early date.

Stilt Sandpiper: Sightings included two at the ferry terminal pond on Cedar Island, NC, 22 July (John Fussell); four at the Brant Island Spoil Site, off Morehead City, NC, 30 July (Fussell); and two at the sod farm along Hooper Lane, Henderson Co, NC, 31 July (Wayne Forsythe).

Stilt Sandpiper, 11 August 2012, Henderson County, NC. Photo by Wayne Forsythe.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: Three at the sod farm along Hooper Lane, Henderson Co, NC, 27 July (Wayne Forsythe, Todd Arcos) were quite early.

Ruff: A male in partial breeding plumage was found at the ferry terminal pond on Cedar Island, NC, 8 July (John Fussell, Jack Fennell). This Eurasian stray was seen and photographed by many until last seen 17 July (Judith Fortney, Jeff Lemons).

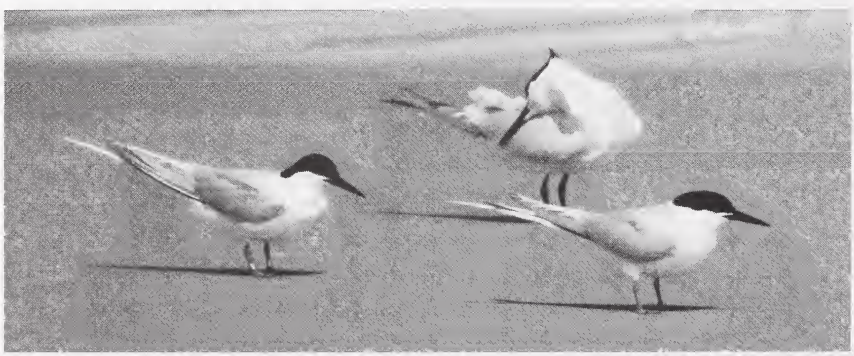
Ruff, 12 July 2012, Cedar Island, NC. Photo by Phil Fowler.

Short-billed Dowitcher: Seven at the sod farm along Hooper Lane, Henderson Co, NC, 31 July (Wayne Forsythe) were a good find for the mountains.

Least Tern: A nesting colony was found on a rooftop in Camden, Kershaw Co, SC, 6 June (Lex Glover, Robbie Speaks). 25 miles N-NW of the nesting site at Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter, SC, this nesting site is one of the farthest inland ever noted in our region.

Black Tern: One over Lake James, Burke Co, NC, 30 June (Jamie Cameron) was early.

Roseate Tern: One was seen during a fishing trip off Hatteras, NC, 6 June (Brian Patteson). National Park Service staff photographed two, one leg-banded, on the beach near the lighthouse at Cape Lookout, NC, 21 June (Felicia Nawn, *fide* Jon Altman).



Roseate Terns (with Sandwich Tern), 21 June 2012, Cape Lookout, NC. Photo by Felicia Nawn.

Black-billed Cuckoo: This species was well-reported in pocosin habitat of eastern NC this summer, with breeding confirmed at two sites. In the Croatan NF, one was heard singing just NW of Catfish Lake, 6 and 11 June (John Fussell); one was heard singing just SE of Catfish Lake, 7 June (Fussell); two were heard singing at separate sites along Catfish Lake Rd, 17 June (Fussell, Jack Fennell); and an adult was observed feeding a juvenile, with a second adult in the area, along Catfish Lake Rd, 28 June (Fussell, Scott Winton). At North River Farms in Carteret County, two or three were heard singing 24 June (Fussell, Fennell). Fussell notes that attempts to relocate the birds in July were largely unsuccessful, and wonders if the birds had already left the area or simply become more secretive. Fledglings were photographed at Pocosin Lakes NWR in July (Todd Pusser, *fide* Susan Campbell).

Merlin: One on Seabrook Island, Charleston Co, SC, 6 July (Jim Edwards, Jane Chew) was extremely unusual for the mid-summer.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: One was photographed along the Bald Knob Ridge Trail, just off the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP) near the entrance to Mt Mitchell SP, Yancey Co, NC, 5 June (John Gerwin, Brian O'Shea, Mark Simpson, Marilyn Westphal).

Alder Flycatcher: Six to eight were seen around Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, NC, throughout the season (Rick Knight).

Willow Flycatcher: One was seen and heard "fitz-bew-ing" at a willow-lined pond at Prairie Ridge Ecostation in Raleigh, NC, 18–30 June (Brian O'Shea, m. obs.).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: The pair seen for a third straight year along Gunter Rd near Piedmont, SC, remained until at least 21 July (*fide* Paul Serridge). The landowner reported seeing juveniles at the site in late June / early July (*fide* Serridge). A nest site was newly discovered near South Pointe High School in Rock Hill, SC, where two adults and four juveniles were seen, with one of the adults feeding the juveniles, 14 July (J. D. Bricken, Will Stuart, Jill Palmer).

Willow Flycatcher, 30 June 2012, Raleigh, NC. Photo by Kent Fiala.

Horned Lark: Peak summer counts at North River Farms, Carteret Co, NC, were 40 on 1 July and again on 29 July (John Fussell, Jack Fennell).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Three were found at 1400–1700 feet, a low elevation for this species during the breeding season, near Rose Mountain in the Pisgah NF, Burke Co, NC, in early June (Merrill Lynch).

House Wren: Locally unusual during the breeding season, two House Wrens were seen and heard singing in a yard in Greenville, NC, 23 June (Nick & Veronica Pantelidis).

Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, 15 July 2012, Rock Hill, SC. Photo by Phil Fowler.

Carolina Wren: Two seen at 5900 feet on Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, NC, 22 and 29 June (Rick Knight) were thought to be in post-breeding dispersal.

Swainson's Thrush: Suggestive of breeding in the area were the two or three regularly heard along the BRP in the Black Mountains, Yancey Co, NC, in late May through 20 June (Mark Simpson, Marilyn Westphal).

Hermit Thrush: Known to breed in the higher spruce-fir forests of the NC mountains, Hermit Thrushes were tallied at ten at Mt Mitchell SP, Yancey Co, 21 July (Nick Flanders, Eric Harrold); six at Grandfather Mountain, Avery Co, 22 July (Flanders, Harrold); and five to six on Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, throughout the season (Rick Knight).

Cedar Waxwing: Summer sightings made in the eastern portion of our region included pairs at Carolina Sandhills NWR, SC, 23 June (Ali Iyoob, Mark Kosiewski, Robert Meehan) and at Prairie Ridge Ecostation in Raleigh, NC, 28 June (Brian O'Shea); and individuals along Breeding Bird Survey routes in Youngsville, NC, 4 June (Brian Bockhahn, Kyle Kittelberger) and Sampson Co, NC, in early June (Clyde Sorenson).

Mourning Warbler, 5 June 2012, Richland Balsam Overlook, NC. Photo by Jeff Lewis.

Northern Waterthrush: One on Sullivan's Island, Charleston Co, SC, 10 July (Will Post) was quite early.

Mourning Warbler: A singing adult male was found at the Richland Balsam Overlook, milepost 431 along the BRP,

border of Haywood Co and Jackson Co, NC, 5 June (Jeff Lewis). The bird was seen and photographed by many, though never with a mate, through 19 June (Jesse Pope).

Magnolia Warbler: Suggestive of breeding in our region were one to two regularly heard and seen along the Bald Knob Ridge Trail, off the BRP near the entrance to Mt Mitchell SP, Yancey Co, NC, 24 May through 28 June (Mark Simpson, Marilyn Westphal) and again 6 July (Kelly Hughes); at least three singing males on Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, NC, throughout the season (Rick Knight); and up to three seen and heard along the Old Mitchell Trail at Mt Mitchell SP, Yancey Co, NC, 3–7 July (Chris Kelly, Simpson, Westphal).

Vesper Sparrow: At least three pairs nested on Round Bald, Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, NC, during the season (Rick Knight). One was seen in the Elk Knob Game Land, Watauga Co, NC, 14 June (Ron Morris, et al.).

Lark Sparrow: An adult was seen in the Sandhills Game Lands, Scotland Co, NC, 13 June (Ali Iyoob, Mark Kosiewski, Robert Meehan).

Dickcissel: One's nocturnal flight call was recorded over Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC, 3 June (*fide* Kim Brand). The peak count of singing males at North River Farms, Carteret Co, NC, was 27 on 24 June (John Fussell, Jack Fennell).

Eastern Meadowlark: One found on Round Bald, Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, NC, 19 June (Rick Knight) was the first ever seen at that site during the summer.

Red Crossbill: Two of the better counts from the NC mountains were eight in the Middle Prong Wilderness, Haywood Co, 9 June (Mark Simpson, Marilyn Westphal) and five on Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, 21 June (Rick Knight).

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